

The Unexpectedness of Christ

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OUR ideas about great historical figures, or about masterpieces or superb prospects half-remembered, are apt to slide with the lapse of time into vagueness. The uniqueness of impression is liable to be blurred into generalization in the mind. Then one day we return freshly to a new survey, and lo! what we have fancied for years that we understood is something vaster and different, more wonderful—and disconcerting. From imagining that we “knew” this character or phenomenon, we come to reproach ourselves for never having known either at all.

If this is so of a noble scene or work of the human mind, it is startlingly true of the profoundest and least predictable of personalities, that of Our Lord. With the best will in the world to avoid platitude born of reverence, safety or timidity, most of us here carry some convention about with us: and conventionality tends to dim the eye and hide whole surprising tracts of the subject from us.

How many have, at one time or another, asked themselves—out of a fund of love which excuses the curiosity—how did Our Lord appear to those about Him? Obviously, as careful reading of the Gospel indicates, a considerable influence was exercised by glance, gesture, silences and reticences. Granted that the question is not supreme, still it may have a contributory significance for us, and in any case there can have been few alert and devoted minds which have not asked it. The pious artists of the past have been given remarkable freedom to present their own imaginations of our Saviour; and these differ so among themselves that they cannot all be true to the fact. There can be no reason why reverence and a close scanning of the sacred text should not give us an outline more helpful and exact. The materials are there in the inspired record for an unforgettable picture of striking physical traits and human preferences: and the manner of doing a thing is often as full of vivid meaning as

the deed. Let us refresh our sight by reference to the sources and the eyewitnesses.

It is in every way improbable *prima facie* that Christ was, 'as' many recent century artists have painted Him—blonde, very slender, mild, feminine, with tapering fingers and an effect of, may we say langor. Numbers of thoughtful believers must have found it odd in the highest degree that this moonlit figure should have passed with many for the sunlight of the historic fact. Certainly the clear statements of the Testament run sharply counter to all sentimentalizing versions. Jesus was from birth to death a vigorous open-air man. Life was one succession of heavy drafts upon His vitality, which must have been immense. Born in a cave, escaped with across the desert to Egypt while an infant, taken about Palestine in boyhood and up to Jerusalem among caravans, left to Himself somewhat (as His converse with the rabbis shows), a worker in the strenuous manual occupation of carpenter for eighteen years, obviously a man of the people and of open-air Nature as every graphic parable proves—God built well and truly on this tough foundation of sinew and toil and endurance and keen sense-perception. The nearest modern parallel that can at all help us here would be these sturdy peasant craftsmen—so profoundly refreshing to meet and to converse with—who are to be found in unspoiled places; men who know their own skilled honest work, understand natural phenomena, and quietly have mastered and creatively meditated on a little literature, and that the best. Their hands are workers' hands, strong and sensitive; the fingers square at the tip; they have a reassuring touch (sick men or animals know that); they can tie safe knots (for instance, a knotted scourge if necessary); can make a good yoke (a yoke that is easy, and makes the burden light!); theirs is a poised, primal open-air manhood. All this we find in Our Lord, and much else. He slept a good deal in the open, both by preference sometimes and because He had to; and could sleep deeply through a storm till some pleading *human* voice roused Him. He could fast long without ill effects: a sure test of stamina of body and mind. Always He was astonishingly *ready* for any call on energy or faculty: a proof of great bodily fitness no less than of moral power and goodness. He was calm and could "rejoice in spirit" amid hos-

tility and danger—not by means of stoic indifference or escape of any sort, but by having an internal spring of soundness, assurance and insight. An unfailing judge of character, He “knew what was in man.”

Look also at the feats of walking which were quite ordinary with Him, witnessing to His physical robustness. He started from Tyre and took the great caravan road from Sidon to Damascus (across Lebanon and Antelebanon) and returning to Galilee from the east by Cæsara Philippi—in a glare of heat, instructing His followers most of the time, and occasionally bidding them to rest. Or consider His foot-journeys lasting six hours on end from Jericho to Jerusalem on a road climbing once to 3,000 feet, without shade, over rocky solitary country. He began one such by healing a blind man, and the same evening, unwearied, He was present at a meal in His honor at Bethany. These are wonderful even for one in the prime of bodily life at thirty. Often after a crowded day's work, virtue going forth from Him, He climbed a hill in the evening and sometimes remained there for the night. No wonder He warned a young scribe to count the hardships of following Him, and that He spoke slightly of “living delicately in king's houses,” and that He contrasted Himself with the birds and foxes which had nests and holes, and that He deprecated the usual “two coats” which travelers allowed themselves and enjoined only one. He was Spartan, but for far deeper motives than the Spartans. He praised John the Baptist in the wilderness, austere, bleakly honest, alone: but a greater than John was here—who suffered more without seeking hardship: hardship came to Him. His body was hardened without blunting His amazing susceptibilities to others' needs. That is why in the climax of the torments in Pilate's hall He had a comprehending, magisterial glance for Peter; and at the Last Supper, calmly bade the traitor do the deed quickly; and could stand not only the three consecutive “trials” which were a repeated miscarriage of justice, till the Roman authority itself was staggered at such morale and virility, and Pilate, shaken and moved, cried: “Behold, a man!” Jesus did not die under the scourging, as many did. Nor on the precipitous path along which He carried the heavy timber to which He was to be nailed. He died hard, very hard. His fund of vitality resisted assaults—moral and physical—to

which perhaps any other human being must have surrendered sooner. Here we see the shrinking from death which fresh, vital nature experiences when it is utterly free of ennui, life-weariness, pessimism, sloth, or degeneracy.

All this, with much more, goes to show that the popular and pictorial idea of our Redeemer is partial and, however well-intentioned, not quite worthy. I once had a long interesting talk on this subject with the sculptor Epstein in his home, with his sculpture of Christ before us. He was impatient with the quasi-traditional, but really subjective and arbitrary, presentments of the world's greatest Man, and I think carried the point that most of these were largely unhistoric and unscriptural. But I could not allow that his own version rectified the error in the true way; although in its starkness it did at least oblige people to question their easy assumptions. Remember, here, that this firm healthy hold upon life which Our Lord possessed is itself the measure of the laceration which His persecutors brought to bear upon Him to cut Him away from life. His vitality was the measure of His Passion. Socrates had no passion, humanly speaking. He made his escape with some philosophizing and a few friendly jests; beautiful in their way, but in a minor key—quite apart from Our Lord's superincumbent consciousness of the tremendous issues of life and death involved in His representative sacrifice. Again, Buddha (whose youth was over when he took to religion as a teacher) underwent no such tension "between the fell and incensed points of mighty opposites." He avoided all possibility of that in advance by fabricating a creed of anti-life, anti-feeling—

"housed in a dream, at distance from the kind."

And Mohammed was for periods of his life an invalid, and an ecstatic. A sick man, he became a prophet as the result of an illness, and all his life he was dogged by epilepsy and hysteria. Even the Christian saints have not their Master's wonderful normality and life: they can but evince aspects of Him. He drew renovating draughts of strength from "fountains of the Infinite," His existence was uninterruptedly and, as it were, naturally planted deep in God; quite simply He and the Father were one. And the effect of all this, even upon the body and his habitudes and resilience,

could not fail to be remarkable, in the perfect balance and restraint displayed when around Him there were waves of fanaticism or exuberance.

These, I submit then, are facts which add accent and color—give life and character and drama—to our mental portrait of Him, and consequently make vivid and intelligent our devotion.

By contrast with these records, look at the attempts of different times and races to weave a myth to glorify some one man above his fellows. They follow the lines which we can forecast. They idealize in the manner of novelist or poet or folklore. That is, they abstract whatever might rebuff easy acceptance, all that might perplex or be a stumbling block. Yet in no case is the result successful. They have the mark of human invention or of some intermediary's omission. Whereas anything added to the Gospel figure does not contribute to the whole, but is a foreign substance which cannot be blended in the crucible. As Lavater wrote on a scrap of paper as he lay dying, "Terrible and without number are the doubts of the believing Christian, but the unfathomableness of Christ conquers them all. Human devotion, joined with fine imagination, can do much to exalt the memory of a powerful character among men—but it would never go about the work in the way of the Gospels. Hence those of us who have paid the Gospels the compliment of repeated readings, however inadequately, have never been convinced or even shaken by the strenuous efforts of critics to represent them as beautiful tributes by disciples done in a mood of art, elegy and hero-worship. For they were not themselves morally developed up to the level of the Subject of whom they write. It is plain that parts of the story are to themselves inexplicable and await a clearing-up; but down it goes on to parchment equally with the rest. The strangeness, the angles, the hard sayings which might dismay or offend are not evaded: they go into the picture, objectively, without comment (or even with an Old Testament textual comment which only half comprehends the abyss of moral meaning in the incident). Clearly there was so much beyond their present understanding in their Master's nature and acts that they had to be content to report the complex of fact and to leave it at that. The internal evidence of the truth of these narratives is such that,

year after year, the attentive critical mind which is open to nuances and ideas and hints is overwhelmed by it. They are so obviously reporting a Superior: reporting barely, plainly, without adjective or theory, gloss or apology, pleading or defence. In them there is far less of these than in Tacitus. Their wording is a transparency for Him.

The picture resulting has features which (though we are in part and gradually accustomed to them) do not appeal to the natural man but are an obstacle to him. There is much in the ethical revelation which opposes our self-will, much that we would rather wish were not there, but which nevertheless—or therefore—carries the eternal hall-mark of its genesis from above. The community and the evangelists of the first century stood awe-struck, and only half understanding, before Him and the facts of His life even when it was puzzling or displeasing to them. The facts were too strong for them to take liberties with; the character too unique to stand tampering.

In externals, He was too lowly for the people to whom He came. But in His claims, on the other hand, He was too exalted for them. Yet they must adjust to Him, not He to them. As for glory, for a Messiah in their sense was there not a similarity about His miracles? Most of these were performed on sick people, with a complete avoidance of glitter, and with occasional charges of secrecy. Even His miracles showed reserve and selection and reticence, and they were always ethical in character. The expectation everywhere was that "He who was to come" would bring things as they were to a consummation and conclusion. How easy to have been shaped unconsciously by the pressure of this strong mental atmosphere around Him! Yet Our Lord acts spontaneously as though He had never heard of it; instead of falling in with this universal supposition of the race, He made a new beginning. "You have heard them of old times say. . . . But I say unto you. . . ."

Again, He chose not to be brought up in mystery, but in full view of the people, in a carpenter's workshop, with mother and family known, known also their poverty, and in Nazareth with its indifferent reputation. It was an offence that He should be of Galilee at all. The very conditions of His life are a sort of Divine criticism and corrective of the all-too-human precedents and anticipations current then as

now. He does not fit any of the prepared popular molds: the Divine individuality makes its own, the Spirit blew where it would. The result was one who confounded the theorists—"the wise and prudent" no less than the vulgar traditionalists—and did not court the mood of the populace, or the wise in their own esteem by concessions and "tact" which would have been a straight path to instant comprehension, acceptance and success. The life, deeds and sayings, no less than the Cross, were "to the Jews an offence and to the Greeks (with their notions of the sage) folly."

Even today we have not grown to the stature which quite understands. Take a simple example—our secret feeling that a natural calamity is necessarily a portioned-out punishment of sin, or a success a proof of virtue. Our Lord hunted this still tenacious popular fallacy out of its hiding place. "Think you that those on whom the Tower of Siloam fell were worse than others? I tell you nay." This unwincing statement of a puzzling unwelcome truth must have made many of the pious gasp. It perhaps does so still. But there must be no "lying for God," no unsound claims for Providence—which moves on quite other lines. Calamities come to the good and to the evil. The sun shines equally on the bad and the good. We see it every day, and dislike admitting it. But the Word made flesh points to Nature before pointing beyond and behind it. Though the victims of a given catastrophe may be no more deserving of it than obvious scamps who escape all inconveniences, the main lesson—the lesson which alone matters—is that God's judgments run along lines and in spheres far more numerous and real than those of the present and the flesh. As to the tragedy at Siloam which had engraved itself on His hearers, "I tell you that unless you repent, you shall likewise perish. . . . Fear not that which kills the body, but that which kills the soul. Yea, fear *Him*."

This was bracing, buffeting, disturbing doctrine, and therefore very characteristic of Our Lord, with His steep surprises of view, His cogent reversals of the timid and conventional conclusion, His drastic revision of the human, all-too-human, outlook. At once we are puffed away from the little man-made backwaters and are out where the big winds blow. That is true, indeed, of every aspect of Our Lord—bodily, mental, spiritual: His work, sayings, miracles. "All

four Gospels," as Mr. Wells writes—let these words atone somewhat for much not written so wisely—"agree in giving us a picture of a very definite personality, and one is obliged to say, 'Here is a *Man*. This could not have been invented.' Clearly a person of intense personal magnetism, to use a popular phrase. His doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven was a bold and uncompromising demand for a complete change and utter cleansing without and within. Is it any wonder that those who were rich and prosperous felt a horror of strange things, a swimming of the world at His teaching? That they were dazzled and cried out against Him? . . . For to take Him seriously was to enter upon a strange and alarming life, to abandon habits, to control instincts and impulses, to essay an incredible happiness."

The Priest and Social Work

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A paper read at the meeting of the Jesuit Professors' Philosophy Conference, August, 1933.

THE Catholic Church is not a social service organization. Founded by Jesus Christ, entrusted with His revealed truth and endowed with powers to make that truth live in the hearts of men, she is conscious of her divine mission to sanctify and save mankind. And yet, though her mission be spiritual, she does not confine her solicitude to the soul of man. For Christ put no such limits. In the Incarnation He assumed man's total nature; in redeeming man He did not exclude the body. The Church, then, is in the world, not to save pure spirits but to save men, and she has never had any delusions about the nature of man. The sheer light of human reason enables her to see in man an image of the divinity, one loved by God and loving God, and hence an object worthy of our love.

It is the light of revelation, however, that unveils man in his completeness. For in the divine economy man achieves his sanctity and his salvation through incorporation in Christ, and as a member of Christ's Mystical Body he

takes on a character that transcends his natural sociability. He becomes an integral part of a supernatural solidarity and is bound by ties of love with all those in whom Christ lives and wants to live. The united members throb with a new life, the very life of the God-Man. This common incorporation in Christ is at once the unifying principle and the socializing force of Christianity. Although this bond of union is in the souls effected by the life giving sacraments, the members are creatures of flesh and blood and carry the wounded nature of the Fall. They are the suffering members of Christ who "fill up in their flesh the things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ." Christ is living in His members; in fact, He identifies Himself in a special way with those who are suffering bodily privations. "Here on earth," said St. Augustine, "Christ is hungry; He is thirsty; He is naked; He is in prison. All that the Body suffers here, He Himself said it, He suffers."

Genuine love of Christ entails this love of His least brethren, a love that ministers not only to the needs of the soul but to those of the body as well. In fact, the conditions on which Christ will judge the world are precisely the corporal works of mercy. We have it on the word of Christ Himself that we shall be saved or lost for eternity according as we have supplied or refused to supply the material services of which His suffering members stand in need.

It is with no intention of minimizing the need of social justice that emphasis is here given to the works of charity. Many of the evils that beset society are undoubtedly due to violations of social justice, and it would be preposterous to saddle charity with obligations that should be borne by Industry or the State. There is, however, a common delusion that all social ills are the progeny of injustice and that the dawn of social justice would usher in the millennium. To dissipate such an exaggerated claim it is well to realize, first of all, that the poor we shall have with us always. Poverty can and should be minimized, but as long as man is man it is idle to think of its total elimination. In the second place, it must be remembered that even with social justice applied throughout society, we should still have most of the problems that call for the ministration of charity today.

Looking out over the world of 1933, the priest sees a picture of distress that cannot but elicit the words of his Di-

vine Master, "I have compassion on the multitude." He sees original sin writ large across the face of the earth. He beholds Christ's poor in sorrow and distress. He sees mankind tormented in body and mind—a line of suffering that reaches from the cradle to the grave. The deaf, the dumb, the blind, the crippled throng before his vision. He sees little children with hungry faces, hobbling old men with sad faces, unwed mothers and shameful faces, pleading widows with tearful faces, bedridden men and agonized faces. He sees the breaking homes and the broken homes; homes that know not a mother's love; homes where the father's presence is a curse; homes where little children breathe the very atmosphere of sin from their tenderest years and grow up to a career of crime because nobody cares.

Go into the quarters of the poor. Climb the dark stairways in the squalid tenements of our large cities. Witness the grim tragedies of reality that even the pen of a Shakespeare would fail to idealize. Read on the brows of young and old the dark story of blighted hopes and wasting fears, the sense of insecurity, the lost ambition, and the dying vestiges of self-respect. Oh, who can plumb the depths of this sea of sorrow? Who can count the broken hearts? Who can measure the pangs left in the wake of alcoholism, drug addiction, desertions, illegitimacy, feeble-mindedness, insanity, disease, and death? Out of this seething maelstrom of pain and sorrow, wherein poverty is hopelessly engulfed, there arises clear, above the sobs and groans of suffering humanity, a voice choked with tenderness and compassion, a voice that pierces like a two-edged sword every heart that glows with the charity of Christ, "Whatsoever you do these My least brethren you do unto Me."

The Catholic Church has never turned a deaf ear to that plea of Christ. She has answered it down through the centuries with a constant outpouring of love, a love that has written the very history of charity. The heritage is a golden one and is no less an inspiration than a challenge to those in whose hands rests the responsibility of caring for Christ's little ones in our own day. The pageant of Christian charity in our own country has been one of the glories of the Church. From pioneer days to the present, history unfolds the edifying spectacle of men and women consecrating their lives to the service of the blind, the deaf, the dumb,

the sick, the orphan and the aged. With loving self-sacrifice, the faithful contributed to the erection of a system of institutional care, calculated to serve the larger needs of the diocese. The St. Vincent de Paul Society in its mission of mercy was ever the invaluable arm of the Pastor in reaching out to help the poor of the parish.

This traditional administration of charity functioned well until recent years. The growing complexity of society, however, the increasing mobility of peoples and the gradual dehumanizing of relationships made it impossible for the Church to provide adequately for the needs of its people with the equipment at hand. The middle ground between the border of the individual parish and the door of the Catholic Institution had become the modern parallel of the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. It was along this road that the faithful were falling among thieves; it was obviously along this road that the modern Samaritan must needs journey with his balm of charity. Modern social work, availing itself of all the developments in the various disciplines, had already covered this field with a network of organizations, calculated to provide for every material need. In many instances, it had absorbed activities that should have been carried on by the Church. If the Church was a bit slow in sensing the need for adjustment, she has lacked neither wisdom nor energy in the way she has thrown herself into the work of organizing diocesan charities. Practically all the dioceses have organized central bureaus of charities, staffed with well trained professional workers.

Organized social work, through which and in which most of our Catholic charity must be carried on, has reached enormous proportions in this country. In New York City alone, there are 1,500 social agencies. The Welfare Council, a non-partisan institution set up by the group, has succeeded in coordinating the social work of the city. Through intelligent planning, every phase of service is presented and every section of the city served without gaps or overlapping. Representatives from the agencies convene under its direction to discuss the needs of the community, available resources, minimum standards, and means for improving the various services. A Social Service Exchange is conducted by the Council. Through this clearing house, wherein every family contacted by a participating agency is recorded,

fraud is reduced to a minimum and coöperation between a number of agencies is made possible.

The whole structure of social work is built up on the case work method. This method was developed in the family field and has been made the basis of the method used in the specialized services, such as, Child Welfare, Probation and Parole, Vocational Guidance, Medical Social Service and all the others. In the complexity of modern city life, with the services so highly specialized, it would be folly to attempt social work without these modern techniques. For example, one family often presents as many as eight or ten distinct problems, each one of which demands the service of a specific agency. Without the case work method and the social service exchange, there would be a hopeless confusion, wide gaps of neglect and overlapping of interest.

There is a very obvious relationship between case work and pastoral activities. There need be no conflict. Religion is the most vital factor in family relationships and it is often a lack of religion that brings the family to the doors of the agency. More often than not, the family has drifted away from the influence of the Church and the social worker may in such cases be the only one capable of bringing the family back to a practice of its religion. The prudent pastor is well aware of the results that can be achieved through coöperation with the social agencies. He knows the number of marriages that are validated, the number of children baptized and confirmed, the many brought back to the Sacraments each year through the zealous activities of social workers.

There are not a few pastors, however, whose attitude toward social work and social workers is anything but Christ-like. They condemn every effort at coöperation as meddling and denounce organized social work as Protestant in spirit simply because it is ministering to material needs. The idea of the corporal works of mercy has apparently never entered their minds and one wonders what sort of theology forms the basis for the claim that "we should be content to say Mass on Sunday and give the Sacraments." Such complacent piety, that would confine religion to the sanctuary, might be acceptable to a Hitler or a Mussolini, but it smacks too much of the doctrine condemned by St. James to be accepted as a Catholic attitude. The attitude is all too common for

the good of the Church and it is a positive stumbling block to sincere social workers who naturally judge the Church by the fruits of practical charity.

What then is the rôle of the priest in social work? First of all, it is most essential that the Church develop its program of organized charities in all the dioceses. To this end, competent priests have already been selected and trained to assume the task of administration. The ramifications of the work, however, are many and there will be a continuous need for the newly trained in specialized fields. The preliminary training should entail a full time course in a social work school, with actual field work experience. The work of administration will not, it is true, call for actual case work in the department, but it will call for that knowledge of the actual field that can be attained only by actual field work.

As a director of a division in a Catholic Charities Bureau, the priest holds a position of leadership in the field. In constant contact with the heads of other agencies, both public and private, he is aware of every new development in the social work world. Welcoming every opportunity to attend conferences and conventions, he can bring to the various groups the assurance of Catholic coöperation in every worthwhile endeavor to promote the common good. The sublimity of his purpose cannot fail to command respect; his sympathetic bearing cannot but win good will. With such security he cannot fail to warm the hearts of those with whom he deals and by prudent counsel divert his collaborators from unwittingly proposing measures that might embarrass the Catholic cause.

The priest in the parish is immediately responsible for the welfare of his people and should be equipped to handle as many of the cases as his means will permit. To this end, there should be an opportunity either in the seminary or in post-graduate courses for the priest to learn social case work technique. This would increase his efficiency a hundred fold and there is nothing that would win the affection of his people more surely than an ability to direct each case at once to the appropriate agency. His St. Vincent de Paul Society will thrive or fail in proportion to the knowledge he has of modern techniques.

It seems a pity that so much splendid zeal is often al-

lowed to spend itself on a hit-or-miss basis when it could be harnessed for great accomplishments by the ordinary methods of social case work. To my mind, every large city parish would be blessed indeed if it had a curate trained in social case work, a couple of trained workers and a St. Vincent de Paul Society working under such supervision.

But there is a more compelling motive for the priest's activity in social work. As an educator he cannot remain indifferent to the general development of the social work movement. He must throw his efforts into the work of direction and bring his contribution of truth to keep the movement orthodox. The priest cannot regard social work as an isolated entity; it is but one part of his apostolate to defend and propagate the truth of Christ. In fact, there is every indication that in the next few years it will be the most important sector of the apostolate. We are entering upon the era of social heresies.

But if the social field threatens to be the field of challenge, it promises also to be a fruitful field of harvest. In the midst of conflicting philosophies of life, the Church must maintain her own. With a coördinated system of principles applicable to every phase of human life and into which every new conclusion of science has fitted in perfect harmony, the Church is conscious of her ability to give to the world a program of social action that is both Christian and scientific. To this end, she has built her Catholic Schools of Social Work. In the immediate future we may look forward to the production of a distinctly Catholic literature in Family Case Work, Child Welfare, Criminology, Psychiatry, Social Ethics and Sociology.

All this gives promise for the future of our Catholic Charities. With a well trained group of Catholic social workers in every diocesan Charities Bureau, competent to meet the needs of the faithful, we need have no fears of State interference. The tendency of the times is toward State absorption of private agencies. Unless we are farsighted enough to impregnate State social work with Catholic workers and maintain a solid block of efficient Catholic Charities Bureaus, the time is bound to come when the Church will be threatened with a flood of dangerous social legislation which neither logic nor piety will be able to withstand.

Man and Civilization

CHRISTOPHER DAWSON

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DURING the last twenty years modern civilization has been undergoing a series of shocks which have almost destroyed the old complacency and self-confidence that marked the pre-War world. In those days it seemed as though nothing could shake the stability of our civilization, and the average man was content to take it for granted and to concentrate his attention on securing a good place for himself in it and appropriating as many as possible of the advantages that it had to offer. Today the world is on the move again, and no one can tell where it is going or what will happen next; whether our civilization is going to recover its stability or whether it will collapse in ruins. And human nature being what it is, it is only natural that people should look for some simple and straightforward remedy for their difficulties and that they should tend to put the blame on some particular set of individuals—whether it be bankers or Bolsheviks, or nationalist politicians or international financiers.

MUST CIVILIZATION BE CHANGED FUNDAMENTALLY?

Now I do not wish to deny that the present situation does involve particular responsibilities and does call for immediate practical remedies. But we have got to consider whether it is enough to find a satisfactory temporary solution of our immediate difficulties or whether there are not superficial symptoms of something profoundly wrong in our civilization which must be cured before modern civilization can become really healthy. There are very many people today who accept this second alternative and who believe that our civilization requires very drastic and radical treatment if it is to survive. But they are by no means in agreement as to the nature of that treatment. There are on the one hand those who believe that what is wanted is an overhauling of the machinery of our civilization. They believe that our present social mechanism is antiquated and defec-

tive, and that if we could replace it with something more efficient and more up-to-date all would be well. And on the other hand there are those who believe that what is wrong is the spirit of our civilization, and that so long as that spirit is unchanged no improvements in social or economic machinery will help us in the long run. This is a very fundamental difference of opinion and one that has its roots deep in human history. It is the difference between the secular reformer and the religious reformer; between secular opinion and religious opinion; between the Christian point of view and what used to be called the pagan point of view, but is now more commonly known as the modern point of view. Christianity has never shut its eyes to the reality of the burden of inherited evils that weighs down human history, and for that reason it has been condemned as pessimistic and reactionary by the optimists who believe that human nature is thoroughly good, and that history is the record of a movement of continual progress towards a fuller and more perfect civilization.

But even if we admit that civilization is advancing and that we are wiser and happier than our ancestors, still it is impossible to deny that the path of progress has been a bloody one, and every step forward has involved a heavy cost in human suffering. Fifteen hundred years ago, St. Augustine in his famous book, "The City of God," looked back on the history of a great civilization which was just about to pass away, and attempted to sum up its meaning. He saw that Rome had done great things for the world; that it had given men peace and material prosperity and had united the nations by a common language and a common law. Yet these benefits had only been purchased by war and slavery and the oppression of the weak. And when they had been won, they had been used for evil rather than for good; to serve the senseless luxury of the rich and the brutal passions of the mob that crowded to the amphitheater to watch the gladiatorial shows. Moreover, even the peace which Rome had established was only relative; it did not prevent the incessant recurrence of civil wars and disturbances within the empire which were a cause of greater misery than the old wars of conquest. And so, he concludes, it is impossible for anyone with a sense of humanity to consider these things and to see all these extremes of

bloodshed and suffering without feeling that nothing is sufficient to explain or justify them.

It is sometimes argued that all this was true of the past, but that it no longer holds good of the modern world. In ancient civilization human knowledge and human resources were so limited that mankind was always at the mercy of war and famine and disease. But modern machinery makes it possible to do without slavery, and modern scientific development makes it possible to abolish poverty and disease. Unfortunately, we see today that the new world of science and machinery is at the mercy of the same human forces which ruled the old world, and that it is these rather than any material factor which are the real cause of social evils. Science has not prevented war; it has only added fresh horrors to it and increased man's powers of destruction. The weaker and more backward races have suffered more during a century of the expansion of modern scientific civilization than they had ever done before in the world's history. Moreover, we have seen how the progress of industry and technique has led to new forms of economic exploitation, and has given new occasions of friction and rivalry between classes and nations. No doubt it may be argued that this is due to the maintenance of the old forms of social and economic organization in a world that has outgrown them. But the real cause of the evils of industrialism was not so much individualism in itself as the spirit which sacrificed the individual to the economic process, and it remains to be seen whether the same spirit would not manifest itself in a new form even under a different system.

At the present time the old forms of individualism are everywhere passing away before the pressure of the modern state; but although this destroys some social injustices, it also creates others and contains the possibility of a new and more serious menace to spiritual freedom. And this tendency is not confined to a single country or to any one particular political or social system. It may, I think, even be argued that Communism in Russia, National Socialism in Germany, and Capitalism and Liberal Democracy in the Western countries are really three forms of the same thing, and that they are all moving by different but parallel paths to the same goal, which is the mechanization of human life, to the complete subordination of the individual to the State

and to the economic process. Of course I do not mean to say that they are all absolutely equivalent and that we have no right to prefer one to another. But I do believe that a Christian cannot regard any of them as a final solution of the problem of civilization or even as a tolerable one. Christianity is bound to protest against any social system which claims the whole of man and sets itself up as the final end of human action, for it asserts that man's essential nature transcends all political and economic forms. Civilization is a road by which man travels, not a house for him to dwell in. His true city is elsewhere.

THE SPIRITUAL PURPOSE IN HISTORY

Yet for all that, Christianity does not maintain, like some oriental religions, that life has no meaning—that man is caught in the endless round of time and change, like a mouse in a wheel. It asserts that there is a purpose in history and that this purpose is a social one. Against the cities and empires of man, which are founded in violence and injustice and have no end but their own power and wealth, it stands for a spiritual society, a divine commonwealth, which is founded in faith and built up in charity, until it realizes all the spiritual possibilities that are latent in the life of humanity. The revelation of this divine purpose in history and the promise of this spiritual society formed part of the inheritance which Christianity received from the religion of Israel, and the record of this development is to be found in the Old Testament.

That record is in itself a remarkable refutation of the materialist interpretation of history. All the other great religions are linked with some great civilization; Hinduism with the civilization of India, Confucianism with that of China, Zoroastrianism with that of Persia. Even Greece, small as it was, had inherited the great and ancient tradition of *Ægean* culture. Israel alone had no great tradition of material culture behind it. It was an insignificant people that occupied a territory no larger than Wales; a people that was neither rich nor powerful nor highly civilized. And yet it produced the greatest spiritual revolution that the world has known and has had a far greater influence on history than the powerful empires which surrounded it and seemed again and again about to destroy it. Hitherto the

prosperity and strength of a people had been regarded as a proof of the power of its gods. The forces that dominated the world were divinized and worshipped, whether they were good or bad. In Israel for the first time we find this idea reversed. The servants of Jehovah, the God of Israel, are called the poor, while his enemies are the kings of the earth. Nothing in fact could seem more opposed to any idea of a moral government of the world or a divine purpose in history than the world in which the Hebrew prophets lived. They were faced with the spectacle of the triumph of brute force in its most repulsive form and with an apparently aimless process of war and destruction. One after another the surrounding kingdoms came down in blood and ruin. Israel itself was conquered and its inhabitants departed. Then the conquering power of Assyria itself collapsed, but, instead of this bringing relief, it proved to be only the prelude to the destruction of Judah and the sack of the holy city of Jerusalem. The temple was destroyed and the people were led into captivity.

THE CONCEPTION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Through all this age of suffering and destruction the prophets of Israel carried out their mission. They saw these catastrophes as the judgment of God on a civilization that was in revolt against the Divine Law—whether that revolt was shown in the pride and violence of the Gentile world power, or in the oppression of the poor and the social injustice of Israel itself. They taught that the purpose of God was not to be fulfilled by material power, but by suffering and obedience. This defeated people, "despised of man, the servant of rulers," was to be the source of a universal kingdom which should unite all nations in a reign of spiritual truth and social justice. Other prophets and thinkers in different ages may have dreamt of the coming of a perfect state, like the Stoic Cosmopolis and the City of the Sun. But the prophetic conception of the Kingdom of God differs from such imaginations by its objective and historical character. It is founded on the tradition of a real people, an actual society with its own laws and institutions which claimed divine sanction. And consequently while the Platonic and Stoic ideal was simply an intellectual influence which colored men's thoughts about the State, the Jewish tradition was an

historical reality which preserved its social identity when all the surrounding nations had become merged in the cosmopolitan unity of a world civilization.

This tradition was accepted and developed by Christianity—in fact the Christian Gospel was essentially the announcement of the coming of that Kingdom which had been foretold by the Prophets. Nevertheless, Christianity was more than a fulfillment; it was also a beginning. It claimed to be a new creation, the birth of a new humanity, and the inauguration of a new spiritual order. This is the doctrine which runs through the New Testament and finds its full expression in the Letters of St. Paul. In the words of a great religious teacher of the last century: "Christ came to make a new world. He came into the world to regenerate it in Himself, to make a new beginning, to be the beginning of the creation of God, to gather together in one and to recapitulate all things in Himself. . . . The world was like some fair mirror, broken in pieces and giving back no one uniform image of its Maker. But He came to combine what was dissipated, to recast what was shattered, in Himself. He began all excellence, and of His fullness have we all received."

(To be concluded.)